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**PENCE COMMENDS HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE FOR HOLDING HEARING ON MEDIA SHIELD**

**Washington, Mar 14, 2006** -

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Rep. Mike Pence (R-IN), member of the House Judiciary Committee, issued the following statement regarding the announcement of a House Judiciary Committee hearing on a Federal Media Shield Bill:

**"Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to announce that the House Judiciary Committee, under the leadership of Chairman Jim Sensenbrenner, will be holding a committee hearing on the issue of a federal media shield law. I can't think of a more appropriate time to announce a hearing on this bill than during national 'Sunshine Week,' a week focused on the importance of preserving a free and independent press and the public's right to know.**

**"Mr. Speaker, the Constitution of the United States reads, in part, 'Congress shall make no law abridging the freedom...of the press.' This freedom represents a bedrock of our democracy by ensuring a free flow of information to the public. But sadly this freedom is under attack.**

**"Over the last few years, more than a dozen reporters have been issued subpoenas and questioned about confidential sources. In response to this alarming trend, last year I introduced the Free Flow of Information Act, a bill designed to protect a reporter's right to keep sources confidential.**

**"The Free Flow of Information Act strikes the proper balance between the public's interest in the free dissemination of information and the public's interest in effective law**

**enforcement and the fair administration of justice.**

**"Mr. Speaker, American statesman and orator Daniel Webster wisely remarked, 'The entire and absolute freedom of the press is essential to the preservation of government on the basis of a free constitution.'**

**"Senator Webster knew that the ability of reporters to protect the identity of sources and report appropriate information without fear of intimidation or imprisonment is a matter of consequence to all Americans. Without such protection, many whistleblowers will refuse to step forward, and reporters will be disinclined to provide our constituents with information that it is important for them to know.**

**"Promises of confidentiality are essential to the flow of information about the government to the public. The Free Flow of Information Act provides an appropriate approach and careful balance to ensuring that reporters may do their jobs while enabling legitimate law enforcement access to information.**

**"Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to cosponsor the Free Flow of Information Act and I commend House Judiciary Chairman Jim Sensenbrenner on his willingness to address this vital First Amendment issue and look forward to a vigorous debate in the House of Representatives."**

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